

Citizens' Panel Festive Event 2008 - Summary of Results

Worcestershire Hub 4 U

Staff from Customer Services and the Web Team are currently working with Worcestershire Hub partners from the county council and district councils to improve the Hub Online website. The aim is to offer easier access to a wider range of council services online.

The workshop had two areas of focus. The first was online services and online payments, and the second was around the development of the existing Hub Online template. To begin, workshop participants completed a questionnaire specifically about online services and payments to gauge attitudes and opinions. Participants were asked to complete the front of the questionnaire before the session started and the reverse afterwards, in order to determine if opinions had shifted as a result of the workshop.

Panel members then worked their way through four online scenarios using the Hub Online website and scored how easy or difficult it was to find the information they needed. As the final part of the workshop, participants were presented with the proposed new Hub Online template for discussion.

All of the research gathered on the evening was extremely useful and gave a clear indication that there are key improvements that need to be made in order to make the Hub Online website more user-friendly. The results of the questionnaire, the scoring from the online scenarios and the feedback about the new Hub Online template will all be used to feed into current and future project plans by Customer Services, the Web Team and the wider Worcestershire Hub partnership.

Environmental Games Room

Environmental Services is a diverse directorate and the games in the Environmental Games Room were designed to give the group a taste of what Environmental Services do.

The Countryside Service organised a 'Where in Worcestershire?' quiz where the group had to guess from a series of countryside images where in Worcestershire they were. It was designed to raise awareness of our work from managing large Country Parks, Local Nature Reserves and picnic places to maintaining the vast public rights of way network. We offered prizes for whoever guessed the most correct answers - a fruit tree from our current Fruit Trees for Worcestershire Scheme and a selection of our Walking Guide publications.

Walking and cycling map symbols - Symbols and description from the walking and cycling map were laid out and two groups were asked to match the symbols to the description. This was quite a tricky exercise but we had some very determined participants and at the end of the session each team had correctly identified 13 out of the 20 symbols.

Keeping children and young people safe

The Children's Services' workshop was focussed on safeguarding children and young people. The Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) facilitated the workshop, which was aimed at raising awareness about safeguarding issues and the role of the community in keeping children and young people safe.

There were discussions around 3 scenarios and participants' comments were noted. The group was then asked, "What would stop people taking action?" and "What could Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board do to support communities in keeping children safe?"

Members of the group were very positive, saying that the workshop had raised their awareness of safeguarding children and young people. They were asked to comment on how, in their opinion, we could expand this to the wider community.

Discussions showed that the public were not always aware of the range of services that the County Council offered; when the “Hub” was given as an example of somewhere that safeguarding issues could be reported, only two members of the group were aware of the Worcestershire Hubs.

The Information gathered was extremely useful and we would like to thank the people who attended the group for their contribution. This will be given to the WSCB to help raise public awareness in the future.

Have Your Say

The Marketing & Communications Team ran a workshop on the many ways in which Worcestershire residents, businesses and visitors can get in touch with the County Council, have their say and get involved. A short presentation was followed by three activities.

Presentation:

The presentation asked the audience how they would currently get in touch with the County Council, and compare that to a list of ways in which they would normally get in touch with friends, family, bank manager, etc. Notably there were more answers provided with the ways in which the audience got in touch with family, friends, etc. than with the County Council. A number of different ways to get in touch with the County Council were highlighted:

Activity 1: Your County Councillors

The audience were asked further questions about their local County Councillors. Only one member of the group knew their local County Councillor, but had not been in touch with them on what was a County Council service issue.

This activity highlighted the need to not only better publicise County Councillors, but to also inform residents of the different services the County Council and the District Council provides. This is an action the Marketing & Communication team will take forward.

Activity 2: Council Tax Leaflet

Each year the Council Tax Leaflet is sent out with the annual Council Tax bill. The leaflet provides Worcestershire residents with information on how their council tax is to be spent by the County Council, local District Council and Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue service. This activity looked at how best the front page of the leaflet might be designed so that the resident is more likely to read the information within. Three different styles were presented to the group and discussed.

Most importantly the design of the Council Tax Leaflet needed to be localised and relevant. The majority of participants preferred the style presenting a local scene / location distinctive to that District or local to them. All comments put forward will be taken on board for the design of the Council Tax leaflet.

Activity 3: Online Forum

This activity was to demonstrate a different type of public consultation tool, the online forum. The workshop was broken up into three groups, with each group logging in separately to a live online forum. A moderator posted a series of questions, which the groups then discussed. The group's answers were then posted online. Once posted, all other groups could see each group's responses online.

All participants found this activity interesting, as they had not previously taken part in an online forum before. It was also an opportunity to provide feedback and the participants said they had a better understanding of the workings of the council and they were more encouraged to contact their local Councillor.

The Marketing & Communication team found the workshop very useful and would like to thank the participants for their open and honest contributions.